

Worship leaders are musicians, so it makes sense to translate some lessons from our high art into something transformative for our lives on a whole. Here are 5 of them.

1. Follow a Master

Musicians know that in order to get to the top of our game we need a master teacher to show us the way. Every week we subject ourselves to their critiques and wisdom. We deliberately become imitators of our teachers; breathing where they breathe and sounding like they sound.

Two weeks ago, my husband came with me to hear one of my students play in a recital. He looked at me while she played and whispered incredulously, “I hear *you* in her!”

Paul said multiple times in the scriptures, “Be followers of me, even as I follow Christ.” Here, he uses the Greek *mimēomai* or *mimētes* which means “to mimic” or “imitate.” How much quicker would we grow spiritually if we became imitators of Godly men and women who know far more than us? What would our lives look like even a year from now if we began to spend time weekly letting these everyday teachers pour into our lives?

2. Pick Yourself Up, Dust Yourself Off, and Do It Fast!

The hardest moment in a musical performance is the instant right after you really mess up. Sports psychologists know that athletes experience this same challenge. In those moments just following that huge flub that EVERYONE heard, your mental dialogue can be pretty destructive. Your mind will say things like, “Just give up, you’ve already wrecked it, and what’s the use in continuing?” Great musicians know that the best thing they can do in that moment is immediately FORGET what just happened by focusing all the attention on what is coming next. As we hone in on the present and focus our energy on that next phrase, we find ourselves creating the music we were meant to make.

The brilliant writer Paul said it this way, “But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” That means when we aren’t perfect, we deliberately chose to forget and press forward. It means we don’t give ourselves the luxury of stopping for that ever-familiar and prolonged personal flogging that we are so adept at giving ourselves. There’s no time for that. We are in the middle of things. Instead, we press on.

3. Work in Small Increments

It’s a lie that all great musicians practice 6 hours a day. ‘But wait’, you say! ‘We’ve all heard of the “10,000-Hour Rule”, claiming that the key to success in any field is a matter of practicing a task for a total of about 10,000 hours.’ So if we aren’t practicing all day, how do we get there?

Allow me to put it this way. Small chunks of time invested daily or every other day over a lifetime add up to great things. In the life of a musician, we find ourselves practicing during commercials, warming up on our car-rides to the gig, and interspersing musical calisthenics between other necessities like folding laundry and cooking dinner. It’s not glamorous, but it gets the job done.

In Galatians, the Bible says, “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” There are times when we just don’t feel like praying or spending that time meditating on The Word and if anyone were to look at our crazy schedules, they would agree with us that we don’t have the time. If we commit to doing it anyway, by finding and utilizing those in-between moments to their fullest effect, there are promises attached to our hard work. Just take it in small increments, like great musicians do and see how the time adds up to something life changing.

4. Have a Routine

Great musicians don't practice long, we practice smart. We carefully develop daily routines and stick to them religiously. These routines keep the muscles agile, the reflexes honed, and the small motor skills necessary for high performance at-the-ready. My routine lasts about 45 minutes a day. It takes me from high to low, from loud to soft, from fast to slow and so on. It is built to be demanding. If I do it daily, I know that no matter what music is put in front of me and no matter what demands are placed on me this week, I can meet them.

The Bible says it this way, "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground..." We've all heard this verse taught before, but the whole point of this is to do the work *prior* to the challenging moment. Wouldn't this be better than finding ourselves in a mess and then rushing around trying to fashion a solution out of a toothpick and a piece of twine like MacGyver? So what would a thorough daily routine look like in your spiritual walk? What muscles need to be flexed everyday in order to meet the challenges that will inevitably come your way?

5. Find Your Tribe

Music is an innately social endeavor. When you make music together you challenge each other, encourage each other, laugh together, and struggle together. When one person is having a hard day, the other musicians rally around and play even more fervently. Let me tell you that after years of being a musician, there is something about making music together that is far more magical, far more interesting, and far more satisfying than doing it alone. Great musicians make it a point to surround themselves with others and make opportunities to play together. And musicians who quit often do because they don't enjoy doing it alone and they haven't found others to play with.

The Bible says it this way: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!" We need spiritual friends so we can make of this life something artful, something beautiful, something profound. We musicians often have to seek those other players out, so if you don't have these spiritual peers in your life, go looking for them! I guarantee you will find that companionship ups your game and enhances your enjoyment of the journey.